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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 008579

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/27/2010

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S DEMARCHE ON MASASU AND THREE OTHER
POLITICAL PRISONERS

REF: KINSHASA 8505

CLASSIFIED BY POLOFF KENT C. BROKENSHERE FOR REASONS 1.5
(B/D).

11. (C) IN A DECEMBER 27 MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER SHE OKITUNDU (SEPTTEL), AMBASSADOR SWING REQUESTED INFORMATION ON THREE POLITICAL PRISONERS, AS WELL AS "COMMANDANT" ANSELME MASASU. THE AMBASSADOR SUGGESTED THAT THEIR RELEASE AS A NEW YEAR'S GESTURE, COMING ON THE HEELS OF THE RELEASE OF HUNDREDS OF OTHER PRISONERS, WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO A MORE POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE FOR LIBREVILLE II TALKS BETWEEN KABILA AND OPPOSITION FIGURES, NOW TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED FOR THE SECOND HALF OF JANUARY.

12. (C) THE THREE INCLUDED:

-- CLEOPHAS KAMITATU, ARRESTED IN NOVEMBER 1999 AFTER CRITICIZING THE GOVERNMENT IN AN RFI BROADCAST. HE IS CHARGED WITH SELLING CONGOLESE EMBASSY PROPERTY WHILE HE WAS AMBASSADOR TO JAPAN. KAMITATU IS AN EX-MOBUTUIST MINISTER AND AMBASSADOR, AS WELL AS THE FATHER OF OLIVIER KAMITATU, JEAN-PIERRE BEMBA'S DEPUTY.

-- JEANINE MUKANIRWA, AN IV GRANTEE AND HEAD OF A WOMAN'S NGO BASED IN GOMA, WHO WAS ARRESTED DECEMBER 12. SHE IS A CLOSE CONTACT OF THE EMBASSY'S. HER BROTHER, HOWEVER, SERVED AS MASASU'S BODYGUARD AND WAS ARRESTED ALONG WITH HIS BOSS. HE MAY BE DEAD;

-- STEVE MBEKAYI, A LEADER OF A UNION KNOWN AS "SOLIDARITE," WHO HAS BEEN DETAINED FOR THE PAST TWO MONTHS.

13. (C) THE AMBASSADOR THEN RAISED THE QUESTION OF "COMMANDANT" ANSELME MASASU WHO WAS ARRESTED FOR ALLEGED COUP PLOTTING OCTOBER 31, AND REPORTEDLY EXECUTED NOVEMBER 24 NEAR PWETO (REFTEL). THE AMBASSADOR SAID HE HAD RECEIVED SEVERAL REPORTS THAT MASASU WAS DEAD, AND ASKED THE FOREIGN MINISTER TO CONFIRM WHETHER OR NOT HE WAS ALIVE.

14. (C) OKITUNDU SAID HE WOULD MAKE INQUIRIES CONCERNING THE THREE POLITICAL PRISONERS, AND WOULD RESPOND AS SOON AS HE RECEIVED INFORMATION. ON THE SUBJECT OF MASASU, THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID HE HAD RECEIVED NUMEROUS QUERIES OVER HIS FATE, AND WOULD CHECK WITH MILITARY AUTHORITIES. HE GAVE NO FURTHER INFORMATION.
SWING